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NOTICE OF PREPARATION of an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT and SCOPING MEETING

Mokelumne River Integrated Conjunctive Use Program

DATE: July 2, 2024

TO: Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties

FROM: San Joaquin County Public Works Department
1810 E. Hazelton Avenue
Stockton, California 95205

SUBJECT: **Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting**
PROJECT: **Mokelumne River Integrated Conjunctive Use Program**

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify agencies and interested parties about initiation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for the Mokelumne River Integrated Conjunctive Use Program (MICUP or proposed program). The County of San Joaquin (County) proposes to implement the MICUP together with the following Partner Agencies: North San Joaquin Water Conservation District (NSJWCD), Stockton East Water District (SEWD), City of Stockton, Woodbridge Irrigation District (WID), East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD), and California Water Service. Partner Agencies are defined as users of surface water developed through MICUP, or participants in the delivery of surface water for beneficial use. The County will serve as the Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). In addition to CEQA, the EIR will be prepared in accordance with the CEQA-Plus requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to fulfill the requirement of potential federal funding partners to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EIR will identify, evaluate, and disclose possible environmental impacts and develop strategies to avoid, reduce, or mitigate potentially significant impacts that would arise from the implementation of MICUP.

This NOP provides: 1) a summary of the proposed program, 2) the County's preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be analyzed in the EIR, and 3) information on how to comment on the scope of the EIR. This NOP, and other information related to MICUP, is available online at: https://www.sjgov.org/department/pwk/home/news-and-updates.

Program Background: In 1980, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) determined that the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin (ESJGSB or Subbasin) was in a state of critical overdraft. The Subbasin continues to be in an overdraft condition due to the over reliance on groundwater supply to meet demand. To address this overdependence on groundwater, local agencies in San Joaquin County have long sought to appropriate water from the Mokelumne River to meet current and future demand and address the critical overdraft condition. MICUP is a coordinated effort to put unappropriated Mokelumne River water to beneficial use in the ESJGSB through approval of Mokelumne River Water & Power Authority (MRWPA) Water Right Application 29835 and implementation of related projects. Through the MRWPA, the County is leading an effort to identify a preferred program for Partner Agencies to invest in development of the Mokelumne River water

right such that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) would issue a water right permit, allowing the region to secure a long-term, supplemental surface water supply. As the Lead Agency under CEQA, the County has determined that MICUP may have a significant impact on the environment, and the preparation of an EIR is necessary to evaluate potential impacts. There will be opportunities for public participation throughout the environmental review process. At this time, the County requests input from Responsible and Trustee agencies, and other interested parties including organizations, businesses, and members of the public, on the scope of the EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082.

NOP Public Review Period: July 2 to July 31, 2024

During this public review period, interested agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals are invited to provide comments about the scope of the environmental topics to be included in the MICUP EIR.

NOP Written Comments: Written comments must be received by **4:00 PM on July 31, 2024.** Please include "NOP Comment: MICUP EIR" in the subject line and submit comments via mail or email to:

Ashley Couch, PE, CFM
Water Resources Manager
San Joaquin County
1810 East Hazelton Ave./PO Box 1810
Stockton, CA 95201
acouch@sjgov.org

EIR Public Scoping Meeting: The County will hold an EIR public scoping meeting to describe the proposed program and receive verbal comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. No decisions concerning the proposed program will be made at this meeting.

The EIR public scoping meeting will occur in-person at the following time and location:

Time:	July 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM
Location:	Stockton Water Treatment Plant Training Room 11373 N. Lower Sacramento Road, Lodi, CA 95242

To participate in this meeting remotely via Zoom, go to: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82674646997 or call (669) 444-9171 (Meeting ID: 826 7464 6997, Passcode: 056904).

Program Location: The proposed program would be implemented within the Place of Use for Water Right Application 29835 (A029835) as shown in Figure 1. The Place of Use is defined as the geographic area where the water diverted under A029835 would be beneficially used, including the lower Mokelumne River and areas immediately adjacent to and within the jurisdictional boundaries of San Joaquin County. Figure 1 shows the regional location, and Figure 2 shows the estimated boundaries of the proposed program and potential components.

Program Objectives: As previously stated in the Program Background, local agencies in San Joaquin County have long sought to appropriate water from the Mokelumne River to meet current and future demand in the County and to address critical overdraft of the underlying groundwater basin. Numerous studies have been completed as part of various planning efforts in the County to secure water rights for surface water supplies from the Mokelumne River. Previous studies identified potential recharge projects, many of which are described in the recently completed 2020 ESJGSB Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The ESJGSB GSP concludes that an additional 78,000 acre-feet of supply per year is necessary to offset groundwater use or recharge groundwater supplies to achieve sustainability in the Subbasin.

The proposed MICUP objectives include:

1) develop a supplemental Mokelumne River surface water supply;
2) use surface water and groundwater together to respond to drought and climate change;
3) improve groundwater levels in the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Subbasin; and
4) achieve integrated water supply and environmental benefits in the lower Mokelumne watershed.

Proposed Program: MICUP would entail diverting unappropriated Mokelumne River water either to serve existing beneficial uses, such as agricultural irrigation and municipal and industrial water supply, or to recharge water into underground storage for later extraction to meet such demands. Under Water Right Application 29835 (A029835), MICUP would divert up to 110,000 acre-feet per year (AFY) and up to 620 cubic feet per second (cfs) between December 1 and June 30 during wet years, using a combination of existing and proposed infrastructure as shown in Figure 2. In addition, up to 48,000 AFY could be stored in Camanche and/or Pardee Reservoir, subject to available capacity as determined by EBMUD.

Groundwater Recharge Methodologies: There are several methods that may be used to recharge MICUP water. The methods being considered are based on available facilities, land use and crop type, and near surface soil conditions and hydrogeologic conditions.

- Direct Surface Recharge: Direct surface recharge facilities are designed to suit both geologic and hydrologic conditions. Direct surface recharge facilities can be operated as passive recharge facilities, such as recharge basins or unlined canals, or active recharge facilities. Active recharge involves methods to facilitate greater recharge rates by penetrating low permeable or impermeable material in the shallow subsurface, such as dry wells.
- Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Wells: ASR wells are groundwater wells that recharge water directly into the underground aquifer. These wells can be dedicated recharge wells or dual-purpose wells capable of extracting stored water. Recharge wells can be drilled to the depth of the target aquifer(s). ASR wells take up a small footprint and are not restricted by overlying land use.
- In-Lieu: In-lieu recharge is utilizing surface water, when available, “in-lieu” of groundwater pumping. The offset of groundwater pumping keeps water in the aquifer that would normally be pumped as a form of “recharge.” In-lieu recharge requires that surface water be available during periods when groundwater would otherwise be used.
- Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge (FloodMAR): FloodMAR is the process of delivering surface water to flood agricultural fields for intentional recharge of the underlying groundwater system. FloodMAR does not require modifications to existing land or agricultural practices and may utilize existing water infrastructure. However, recharge may be restricted based on agricultural practices and recharge rate of shallow soil layers.

Potential MICUP Projects: The following summarizes the projects that have been identified by Partner Agencies for recharge of water under MICUP.

- North San Joaquin Water Conservation District: NSJWCD would divert MICUP water using existing diversions on the Mokelumne River. Some diversions may be improved to increase diversion capacity and/or improve operational efficiency. Water diverted from the Mokelumne River would be conveyed through existing conveyance pipelines that are currently being improved or are planned to be improved. New pipelines would also expand the geographic extent of the recharge activities within NSJWCD. Several

recharge methods would be used to recharge MICUP water as described above, within NSJWCD boundaries.

NSJWCD also may take delivery of MICUP water from EBMUD's Mokelumne Aqueduct. Recharge opportunities would be coordinated with EBMUD as the owner and operator of the Mokelumne Aqueduct. These recharge opportunities would require a new turnout from the Mokelumne Aqueduct as well as new facilities to convey MICUP water for recharge.

- Stockton East Water District: SEWD would divert MICUP water from existing and new Mokelumne Aqueduct turnouts, to convey to recharge facilities within the district. These recharge activities would be coordinated with EBMUD as the owner and operator of the Mokelumne Aqueduct. Recharge activities may include in-lieu recharge, recharge basins, ASR wells, and dry wells.
- City of Stockton: The City of Stockton would divert MICUP water from the Mokelumne River using existing diversion facilities owned and operated by WID. Water diverted from the Mokelumne River would be conveyed through existing canals and/or pipelines to the City of Stockton for direct groundwater recharge at the proposed Delta Water Treatment Plant (DWTP) Groundwater Recharge Basin project and/or to other basins currently being used to recharge water in North Stockton. The DWTP is currently supplied by a diversion in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. MICUP water may also be diverted at this location for recharge at the DWTP, subject to existing rules and restrictions.
- Woodbridge Irrigation District: WID would divert MICUP water from the Mokelumne River using the existing diversions, including the WID Diversion Dam. Water diverted from the Mokelumne River would be conveyed through existing pipelines and lined or unlined canals to existing and future recharge facilities and detention basins within and adjacent to the WID boundaries. Several recharge methods would be used, including in-lieu recharge, FloodMAR, and direct surface recharge. FloodMAR operations may include recharge on currently farmed fields.

EIR Environmental Impact Areas: The EIR will provide an evaluation of potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating the MICUP. The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of MICUP when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably-foreseeable future plans and projects. It is anticipated that MICUP could result in potentially significant environmental impacts to the following topic areas that will be further evaluated in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture & Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

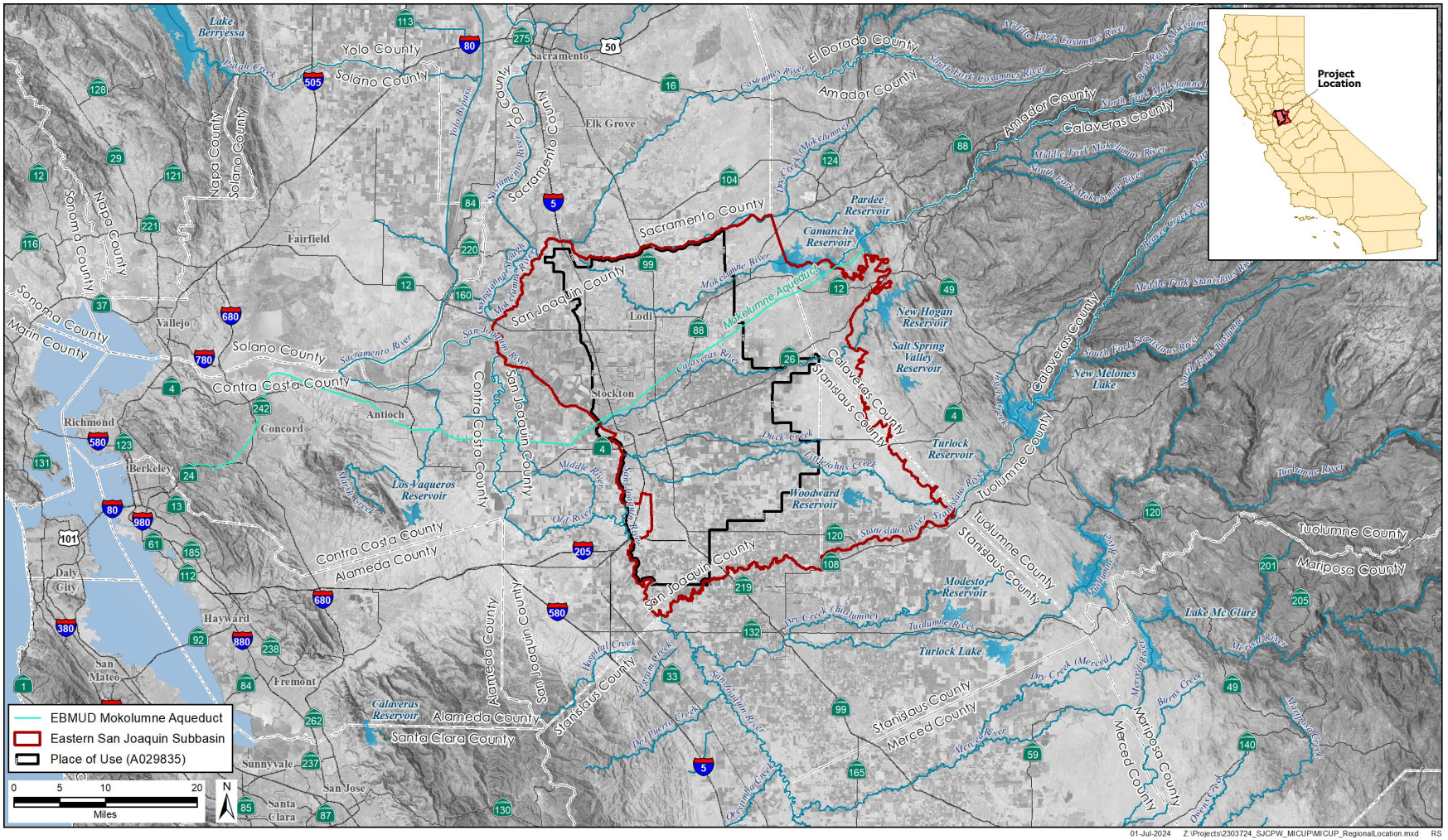
The EIR will analyze the topics identified above, and potentially others, in detail and it will propose mitigation measures to reduce or avoid impacts determined to be significant.

EIR Alternatives: The EIR will also evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives that could reduce or avoid potential environmental effects identified in the EIR, including a required "No Project" Alternative.

Future Notices: All interested parties and organizations wishing to be notified when the Draft EIR is available for review should email Ashley Couch, Water Resources Manager, at acouch@sjgov.org and provide a current email address. When the Draft EIR is available for review, the County will provide a public notice with information about how to access it and provide comments.

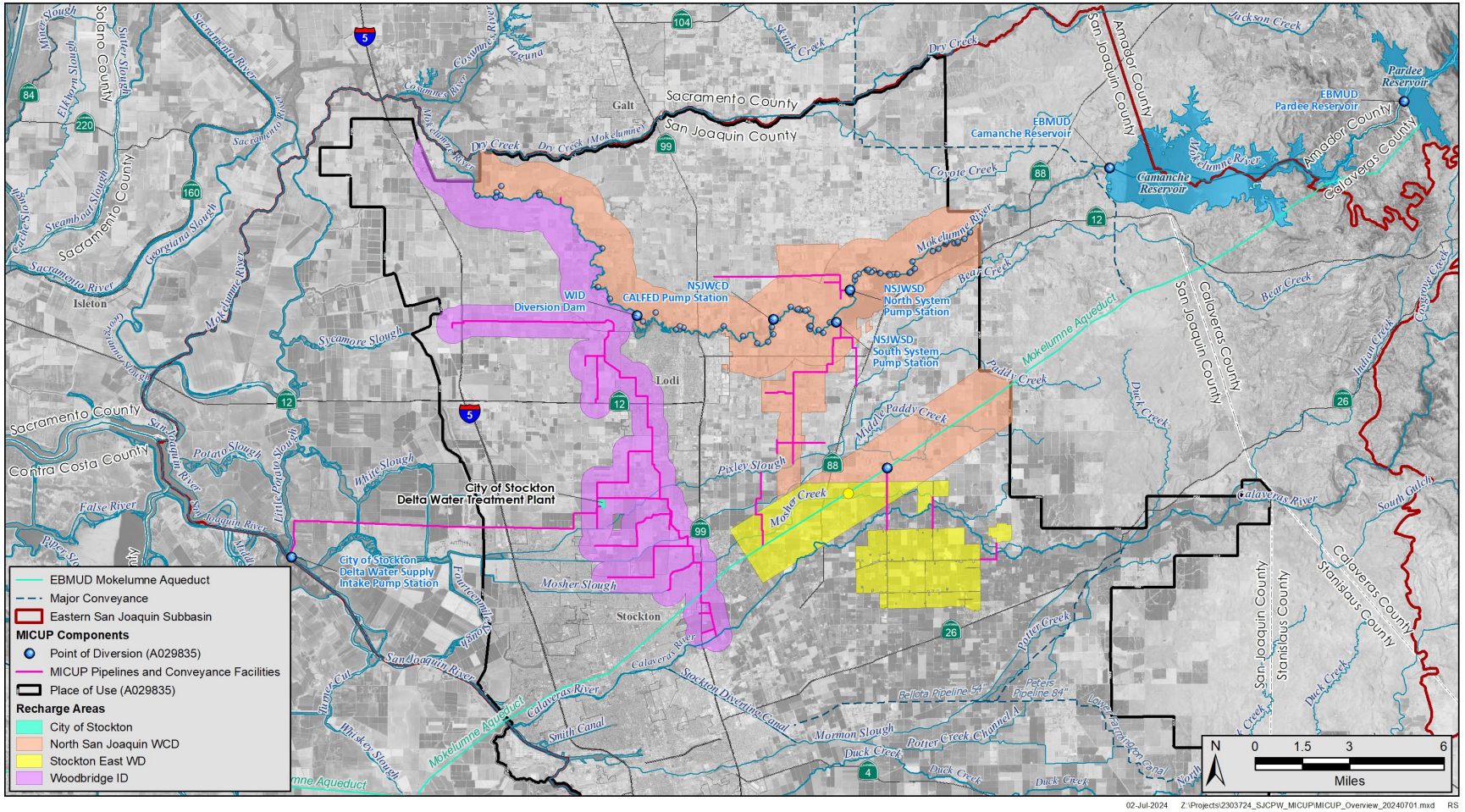
Questions: If you have questions regarding this EIR NOP or the EIR public scoping meeting, please contact the Lead Agency contact, Ashley Couch, Water Resources Manager, at acouch@sjgov.org.

Figure 1 Regional Location



Source: GEI, 2024

Figure 2 Proposed MICUP Components



Source: GEI, 2024